

Who Is Elgin Morris?

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Elgin Morris arrived in town with a little under six hours left.

He wasn't the handsomest man, nor was he the most intimidating. He wasn't the biggest, nor was he particularly scrappy. A middle-aged man who looked like he'd be more at home running a bank or a grocery store, he had gray highlights in fading unremarkable brown hair and a slightly large nose that was used to supporting only slightly stylish glasses. He was wearing a gray suit that looked like he'd slept in it. For a week.

But right now, Elgin wasn't sleeping. He was walking, heading straight to the faux-fifties dinner at the edge of the town of Clairmont. He went up the steps and opened the door to pass through the vestibule into the dinner that had clearly been the scene of a fight. A bad one at that. Broken plates and glasses were everywhere. More than a few chairs had been overturned. At least one booth had been pulled out of the floor, the screws meant to secure it into place scattered out amongst the metal floor along with the broken glass.

"Careful, sir," said a tired and exhausted waitress in attire seventy years out of date. She was sweeping up mounds of broken crockery and glass with a pan and broom meant to handle dust bunnies. "We had an accident," she understated out of exhaustion. Heavy bags under her eyes and a pained expression from her stooped-over posture said more than her words could.

"No problem," said Elgin in a tone that was either perfectly accommodating or sarcastic, the woman couldn't tell. She seemed to forget about sweeping up as Elgin sat down at the bar, his hands on the counter and his fingers crossed. He looked ready to order. The woman looked from Elgin to the empty kitchen in the back of the store where once a short-order cook might have been to prepare something.

"Sir," she said, wondering if he was crazy or just an ass, "we're closed."

"Sign says open," Elgin told her without really looking at her, like he was waiting for another waitress to appear and take his order. The waitress dropped the broom; just

let it fall from her hand, like she expected the clatter of it falling on the debris to make her point. When Elgin didn't seem to notice or care, she walked around the counter to approach him.

"Ah," he said with a smile, like he was finally fully aware of her. "I'd like a cheeseburger, please; no pickles and a chocolate sundae."

"Sir, we're—" She fell silent when she processed the order.

Elgin looked at the woman with a smile as he seemed to bob back and forth in his seat. "Surprised?" he asked her with a twinkle in his eyes. She looked confused, and scared. Elgin read her nametag and said "Darlene, a boy was murdered here tonight." Darlene's confusion was overriding her fear and was the only reason she was still standing. "And you stood there and did nothing."

Darlene's came out as a whisper. "Who are you?"

Again, Elgin's eye twinkled and he gestured innocently for her to lean in close. Confusion behaved like curiosity and she couldn't stop herself from leaning close. "I'm somebody who is mad."

He said nothing more to Darlene, and instead stabbed her in the throat with a spoon.

Elgin shoved her dead body to the ground with disdain. He leaned over the counter to look down at her, then spun around in the barstool with a "whee" escaping his lips. With a cynical smile, he hopped off the barstool and started out the door, his steps crunching as he walked over broken glass.

Elgin descended the steps, buttoning the top button of his suit blazer. He looked up at the nighttime sky of the small little town and seemed a little transfixed for a moment, like he was studying a poster on the ceiling of a teen's room. With a click of his tongue, the middle-aged man started walking down the middle of the street of the small town. It was mostly one street with a handful of storefronts and businesses lining the road with only four stoplights. A few houses dotted the green hills beyond the town

proper. Sort of like how a few cars dotted the otherwise empty and quiet street. The nighttime wind blew, rattling a distant trash can and causing one of the streetlights to sway just a little.

Elgin stopped at an intersection with a double-light – a left-turn signal and a forward signal. Both on green, he tilted his head this way and that, like he was looking into the eyes of a green-eyed monster. He made a gun gesture with his hand and pretended to shoot at the eyes, complete with mouth-made sound effect.

Hushed tones caught his attention and Elgin looked to his left, down one of the side streets, to see a police cruiser parked behind a tire shop. One uniformed police officer was standing next to the driver's window, leaning over and talking to the driver of the car. Both sounded shaken.

Elgin looked around the street, almost disappointed that no one was around. So he skipped into a trot towards the policemen who were oblivious to his approach until he called "Hey guys." He smiled friendly at them. The officer out of the car stood and turned to Elgin. "Did you guys see the fight at the diner?" He asked with a bright-eyed smile, like it was a real hum-dinger.

"Sir, are you okay?" asked the standing officer. He'd extended his left hand, his right hand slowly hovering towards the pistol on his belt.

Elgin smiled wider at the young man and glanced at the police car he stood next to. "Serve and protect," he read off the chassis of the car. He smiled again at the young man, but a smile tinged with anger. "That's funny." He wasn't smiling anymore.

Elgin grabbed the police officer's extended left hand almost like he was shaking it. He yanked it to his own right and slipped his right hand under the officer's arm to grab his neck. He bent the officer over and kned him twice in the face before reaching across his body and taking out his gun. Elgin pointed the gun at the policeman in the driver's seat of the parked car and smiled as he panted a little. "Hands." He spoke out-of-breath but with a gleeful flash of his eyebrows. "Hands, where I can see them."

“Okay,” said the older officer, his hands slowly coming over the steering wheel.

Elgin looked at the younger officer who had fallen against the squad car and was holding his broken, bloodied nose. “Where were you guys?” he asked, keeping both men under cover. “Where were you when that fight was going down? Where were you when that family was drug out of there?”

The two men looked at each other, like they were visibly trying to decide on a lie they could both sell. Seeing their attempt at collusion, Elgin shot the younger officer in the chest.

“Oh my god!” screamed the seated man as his partner fell lifelessly to the ground. “Why did—”

“I DON’T CARE!” Elgin screamed hysterically at the top of his lungs at the police officer in the car. He pointed the gun at the officer in the car and repeated with an angry smile, “I don’t care. Why didn’t you do something? Where were you? Where were the police, while that family was drug out of there?”

The officer’s hands slowly lowered, out of exhaustion. He exhaled a defeated and ashamed sigh. “Town like this; we pick our battles. Gangs come from the big city, come through when they stay off the highway, we gotta decide what kind of trouble we want. They got more money than us. More resources. Definitely more manpower and guns.”

“So enforcing the law was just too hard for you?” Elgin asked.

“We serve and protect our community,” the officer said. “And we do it by protecting people – OUR people – over property.”

“And you do it without bothering with the likes of a mom and a dad and their son who stopped for dinner,” Elgin said. The resigned look in the officer’s eyes was all the confirmation Elgin needed, so he pulled the trigger. The interior of the car was alit with white light for just a second and then, sprayed dark red with blood, it went dark.

Elgin's hand dropped as he sneered with disapproval. With a disgusted shake of his head, he turned away, heading back to the street. He looked at the pistol in his hand as he walked, swishing his lips from side to side as he contemplated with to do with the gun. He decided to just slip it into the pocket of his jacket.

He returned to the intersection and looked down the street, both the way he'd come from and the way he'd gone. A tiny little town was to his left, the empty fields beyond the town to his right. He clicked his mouth as he thought, only to hear a dog whimper in the distance. He looked ahead, down the opposite side street, and saw the cur slinking off into the shadows.

Elgin's eyebrow cocked up and he crossed the street, looking both ways as he did. He walked down the middle of the street, striding through the shadow of the hardware store on his right, and arrived at a parking lot of the post office. The tiny little building looked like the brick it was made out of, decorated only by the comically large American flag waving from a flat pole too small for such a grand flag, and the glass doors that had been kicked in. Inside the doors, he saw three men, some poorly applied bandages, and a lot of blood.

Elgin smiled. He straightened his suit jacket and approached the nighttime post office. With a whistle, he half-skipped up the wooden steps to the broken doors and still opened them, despite their glass having been shattered. Still whistling, he stepped around the three men who were staring at him as they tried to treat blade-related wounds on themselves using an emergency first aid kit behind the counter.

Elgin walked right past them with a cheerful and friendly smile and began to search the PO Boxes. The three men, motionless at first, started trying to quickly finish their hasty and incompetent wound-dressing.

"I can never remember my number," Elgin said, as much to himself as the men. He looked over at them and asked "Does that happen to you? Do you, you know, just forget something that should really be so simple?"

"What the hell is your—" started one of the thugs.

“I mean, when I forget stuff like this, I feel like such a fool,” he said right through the man’s exclamation. “I mean, it’s so obvious, right? How can you forget something that obvious?” He turned to the three men, looking at them like he expected them to share his anger. Or like he was disappointed in them for his forgetfulness, that he was blaming them. Blame was definitely in his eyes.

“You can’t forget your business,” Elgin told the three men who were growing increasingly unsettled. “And you can’t forget that it’s YOUR business, and not anybody else’s. Because if your business BECOMES somebody else’s’, if it AFFECTS somebody else’s’, well then, son, you’ve done messed up big time.”

The two surviving goons didn’t realize their friend had been shot until his head had all but evaporated and his body fell over. Splattered with blood, they both screamed as they frantically scampered away from where he’d been. They looked hysterically to Elgin and shot their hands straight up when he aimed the gun at them.

“I mean, I don’t really care about a bar fight,” Elgin told them conversationally, even as the gun lingered, pointed right at them. “I don’t mind a gang fight. I mean, hey, crap happens, am I right?” he asked with a chuckle. The two goons, their hands up high, stared and nothing more. “But once your crap involved a little boy and his mom and his dad? That’s just sloppy.” He aimed the gun a little more deliberately at the goon on the right. “You done messed up big time,” he told the goon through clinched teeth.

Another gunshot and the sole surviving goon shrieked and fell, clambering back from the two dead and headless bodies of his once-friends. He was crying and screaming, his hands up pleadingly. “We didn’t know!” he yelled at Elgin, hysterical with fear. “We just wanted some food; we didn’t know those guys were going to show up!”

“I don’t care if you knew or not,” Elgin said, stepping over the bodies of the other two to put the pistol’s barrel right in the guy’s face. “What I care is that you couldn’t even handle your business! That mom and that dad and that little boy paid with their lives because you pussies were too weak to even handle a fight!” He punched the goon in the eye with the hot barrel of the gun, making the young thug scream.

“We didn’t kill nobody!” the goon yelled between shrieks of pain as he held his eye.

“You might as well have,” Elgin told him. “Because you worthless losers couldn’t even handle yourselves, they were killed because of you.” Elgin stepped back, calming. He adjusted his jacket and sniffed like he was done with this. “Maybe it’s not your doing,” he conceded. “But it’s still your fault.” Elgin fired again, this time shooting the goon in the stomach. He howled in agony like never before. “Now, be a good little loser and go find some place to die.”

Elgin left him bleeding out the front and the back and exited the post office, again observing the etiquette to open the door as he did. He walked back out onto the street with a whistle that kept tune with the screaming agony of the thug he left behind.

Elgin walked back to the intersection, returning the gun to the pocket of his jacket. He strolled down Main Street, down the very middle of it, like he was drunk or at least lost in reflection. He whistled. He hummed. He sang a little. He carried himself like a man who had the weight of the world on his shoulders and had simply stopped caring. He wasn’t free of worry; he was simply free of the effects of worry.

He came across an old man unlocking the front door of a closed store. The man peeked his head out and listened. He spotted Elgin far later than seemed likely and said “Oh! Hello there.” He opened the door. “Did you hear thunder?”

“Thunder?” Elgin asked. He seemed to give it way too much thought. “Yeah, I suppose so.” He nodded like it was an agreement, not really an acknowledgement. “Listen,” he said to the old man. “There was a fight at the diner at the other end of town.”

“Oh no,” the old man said. “Nobody got hurt, I hope.” Elgin snickered darkly but said nothing. “Was it the gang?”

“Which gang?” Elgin asked.

“We get troublemakers from the city all the time,” said the old man, removing his spectacles to wipe them on a tank top so thin, it was nearly transparent. “But the Yelchin boys are the local variety. If there was a fight, they probably started it.” He returned his glasses. “Did anybody call the police?”

“The cops did what they do,” Elgin said flatly with a smack of his lips. “Where are the Yelchin boys?”

The old man grew cautious. “Oh, I don’t know. Maybe down at their daddy’s farm?”

Elgin nodded and adjusted his jacket. “And where might I find that?”

216 East Rutherford Road.

It was less farmland and pastures than rolling green hills. Wire fences crisscrossed all over, slicing up the fields like some kind of bizarre cake. The grass was dying in spots and muddy plots appeared everywhere. Animal tracks made by lazy and unattended cows and horses likewise drew lines through the pastures.

Down the gravel driveway, long as the shadows cast by the moon overhead, Elgin walked. His city shoes didn’t manage the chunks of rock very well but he didn’t notice enough to be bothered. His eyes were fixated on the farm house at the center of the labyrinth of wire fencing. It was an older house, with once-white walls that had chipped and faded from the elements. A porch wrapped around the whole estate – if it could be called that – and it was on that porch that a man in blue jeans and a suit jacket not unlike Elgin’s sat up from a bench. He spotted Elgin and called into the house, “Guys.”

As Elgin arrived at the steps up to the house, two other men stepped out through the squeaking screen door made of wood and enthusiasm and very little know-how. “Car brake down?” asked the last man out of the house, his thumbs stuck in his low-riding pants behind a giant belt buckle. He was shirtless, sporting an almost-impressive

body that had been much better years ago and he hadn't accepted its deterioration just yet.

"No," Elgin said, still approaching the steps. "My family and me, we stopped for dinner." He ascended the steps like he owned the house. Face to face with Shirtless now, he said "We found the diner kind of rough." Shirtless didn't know what to think and being so directly challenged by this older man was clearly a new experience for him. Likewise, his two partners weren't sure what to make of this. "I was kind of hoping," Elgin told Shirtless "that you might have something for me."

Shirtless laughed right in Elgin's face, his two partners snickering as well. "Why in the world would I have anything for you?"

"Because," Elgin told him with a nod to the jacketed man on his right "I know the man who owned that jacket." He made direct eye contact with Shirtless. "Excuse me: knew."

Elgin hit shirtless in the jaw with his right elbow then slammed that elbow into the jacketed man on his right. His fist primed and cocked, he punched the thug on his left, the blows all landing with enough surprise to send the three men to the ground. Out came the police pistol and Elgin shot both men on either side of him, all but decapitating them with the gunshots. Shirtless was screaming, backing up against the screen door.

"You know, I left another little pussy just like this a few minutes ago," Elgin told him. "You might have noticed if you were listening to the gunshots." He grabbed Shirtless by the hair and kicked the door, knocking it in. He dragged Shirtless into the ramshackle house and threw him into the corner of the kitchen, slamming him against the metal frame of the sink.

"What the hell do you want?!" Shirtless screamed as his feet slipped on the cheap linoleum floor and he fell to the ground.

Elgin stomped Shirtless in the face, cracking his skull against the cheap cabinetry of the kitchen. “You killed him!” he screamed at Shirtless. He knelt down, getting into Shirtless’ dazed field of view. “That man didn’t do anything to you. Didn’t do anything at all. And you and your bastard friends drug him and his wife and his son – HIS SON – out of that diner like they’d done anything to you. The only thing they did is hide in a booth while you beat the crap out of some hoodlum rivals of yours.”

“Th-they were on our turf,” Shirtless dribbled out. Blood was dripping down his neck from the back of his head.

“Those other guys or a family of three?” Elgin asked, his jaw so tight, his teeth might shatter. When Shirtless didn’t answer, Elgin stepped back, shaking his head. He was beside himself with rage and incapable of deciding how to release the madness. A glance at the cleaning chemicals on the counter and he stepped over Shirtless and, stopping up the sink, began pouring them into the sink. “You know, I was a good boy.” He emptied several bottles of different window and surface cleaners into the sink and started the hot water. “But like any boy, I said some stuff my mom didn’t approve of.” He looked down at Shirtless who was going a little pale. “I mean, I bet you can understand. You were probably a mischievous little boy.”

“My mom’s gonna be pissed,” Shirtless told him in a haze of concussed confusion.

“So when I said something I shouldn’t, like a bad word, my mother washed my mouth out with soap,” Elgin turned off the faucet, smoke and steam rising out of the sink. “So, for what you did, I think something a little stronger is called for.”

He grabbed Shirtless up by the hair, spun him around, and grabbed the back of his blood-soaked head. Elgin slammed Shirtless’ face into the bottom of the water-and-chemical-filled sink and pressed down hard. Shirtless began to kick and flail, to fight futilely against Elgin. But the concussion, the confusion, and everything rendered the resistance token at best. In a few seconds, Shirtless stopped moving.

But Elgin didn’t stop. He kept pressing Shirtless’ face into the sink. “Do you know what stealing a father does to a little boy?” he told Shirtless as he kept pressing

down with all his weight. “I mean,” he said with a dark sarcastic tone, “positive male role models are so critical.” He pulled up on Shirtless’ head just enough to slam it down again. “Especially someone’s dad!” This time, after the impact, there was pronounced crack and the water began to turn soupy brown.

Elgin held the head under the water for a moment longer, long enough for him to catch his breath. His face was warped with fury and exertion. Once his breath returned though, an act finalized with a big sigh, he worked his jaw a little like he was trying to get his ears to pop. He turned the faucet on again, rinsing his hands off with a bit of a whistle as the sink began to overflow and spill out onto the cheap linoleum floor.

Amidst the dripping water over the side of the simulated wood counter, Elgin heard the sound of a car pulling up and stopping. He could practically visualize the engine going cold and the doors opening as somebody call “Greg?” Elgin sniffed and turned from the sink, wiping his hands on Shirtless’ pants. Leaving the body dangling over the side of the counter, Elgin strolled back towards the front door as two men approached. Elgin got to watch them get close enough to realize the two dead bodies on the porch were just that, and to register the horror of the gunshots. The guy at the rear threw up explosively. The guy at the front screamed, “Greg!” just before spotting Elgin coming out of the house.

“I’m not sure who ‘Greg’ is,” Elgin said as he stepped around the broken remains of the cheap screen door that he’d kicked in just a few minutes ago. “But there’s nobody alive in this house.”

“Y-you’re alive,” said the new arrival, a smart-looking boy who couldn’t have been old enough to drive. “What happened? Who are you?” he asked with a quaking voice. Behind him, his ‘backup’ was still vomiting more. More muscles than presence, the somewhat-big man was on all fours.

“I’m Elgin Morris.” He turned and looked back at the house, as though the house – not any of its occupants – were the culprit in the crime. “As for what happened here,” he said with a slightly sleepy tone and gaze, “is what happens when you mug, beat-up, kidnap, humiliate, and then finally murder, a boy’s dad. And you do it, right in front of

him.” Elgin smiled. He sniffed again. “My allergies must be coming back.” He scratched his nose.

“You friends with the family?” asked the kid as he backed up to his muscle who was finally no longer throwing up, though he was still on all fours. “Hey, listen, that wasn’t supposed to go down like that, you know? Things just got carried away, alright? Things got out of hand.”

“Oh, things are going to get carried away right now,” Elgin promised the kid. He drew out the pistol and shot it without hesitation at the big man on all fours. The powerful slug tore through his body and he was knocked off his hands and knees. “Don’t!” Elgin screamed at the boy, pointing the gun at him as the boy started to run. “Don’t. You. Dare.” Elgin seethed for a moment, staring at the boy. “He a friend of yours?”

The boy sobbed and nodded his head rapidly. “What’s your name?” Elgin spontaneously asked cheerfully.

“Carlos,” the boy said between hysterical sobs.

“Carols, who’s he?” Elgin asked with a nod to the dying big man.

“He’s my brother!” Carlos sobbed. He looked to Elgin with a pleading face but Elgin shot Carlos’ brother again, causing the body to go skidding across the gravel road. “NO!”

“Shut up, Carlos!” Elgin yelled at the boy. Once Carlos had fallen silent, Elgin took on a demeanor of calm, though it was clearly a strained mask he wore over his rage. “Carlos, you and your brother are going to die by this gun. You understand?” Carlos sobbed huge childish tears that distorted his face and caused his whole body to shake. “Do you know why?”

When Carlos shook his head, Elgin screamed “BECAUSE YOU TOOK HER!” He got right in Carlos’ face, pushing his forehead into Carlos’ and nearly knocking the boy to the ground. “You took her away! You took her away and you did god-knows-what

and then you killed her! You killed her!” He was suddenly so calm, it scared Carlos even more. Elgin put the pistol to Carlos’ head. “You don’t get it, do you?” he asked Carlos. “You don’t have any idea what it’s like to do that to a child, to a child’s mother. You don’t have any idea of what watching her be torn down and then finally murdered does to a little boy, do you?” Carlos was too busy crying to answer. “Without a mother in his life, a little boy can turn into a monster, like me.”

Elgin resumed shooting Carlos’ brother. Over and over, he fired across the growing distance, the echoes of the shots ricocheting off the sky like lightning. And then, all that was left where the echoes as the gun only registered again and again with a hollow metallic click.

Elgin lowered the gun and studied it for a moment. He discharged the clip and confirmed the lack of bullets. “Huh,” he said, like he was surprised by this turn of fate.

“D-does this mean I live?” Carlos sobbed.

Elgin looked at him like he’d told a joke. He even snickered into a laugh. “What? No!” he said with a bit of a giggle. “No, no. No, I told you, you were going to die by this gun.” He spoke so calmly and casually, so friendly.

“But there’s no more bullets,” Carlos said, his sobbing calming just enough for him to look at Elgin through his tears.

Elgin nodded with sympathy, his lower lip stuck out in mockery. “I didn’t say you were going to die by bullets.” He punched Carlos in the face with the gun itself. Turning the gun around in his hand, he began to beat down on Carlos with the pistol. Carlos screamed and dropped to the ground, covering himself with his hands. He howled in pain and terror as Elgin relentlessly pounded on him with the gun until the sobs of pain were nothing more than echoes in the sky, chasing the emptiness left by the cracks of the previous gunshots.

When finally done, Elgin stood up from the bloodied mass that had once been a young boy. He was covered in blood and fragments of skin and even bone. His hands

were absolutely coated in slick red viscous that was turning black. His clothes were stained beyond salvage. And the gun was coated in brains.

Elgin looked down at the weapon, like he was disappointed in it for running out of bullets, disappointed it had been a better cudgel. Just disappointed. He glowered at the unrecognizable body that had been Carlos' and he tossed the gun away without a thought. He started up the driveway with a whistle, even as he glowered. He rebuttoned his jacket that had come open during the fatal beating and left the house and the five dead bodies behind.

As Elgin walked up the gravel road to finally join with the main paved road, he looked up at the sky. It was hinting at dawn, with the edges of the world a strange pre-light like a bruise that could not be seen, only felt. Elgin looked at the distant eastern sky and grew sad. As if to hit home his sorrow, a shooting star crossed the sky, disappearing amongst the sea of blackness.

Elgin's jaw worked a little as tears crept into his eyes. He sniffed back at those tears and turned west, starting down the road. "This sucks," he said like a vulgar teen. He walked, continually checking over his shoulder towards the east, like some predatory dog was following him. He wasn't sure how long he'd walked – maybe half an hour, maybe a few minutes – when he came around the hilly bend. He saw traffic lights of Clairmont. They were red and green, with no synergy between them. He played with the thought for a moment that the green light was a black eye he'd given the lights earlier that night. That thought made him smirk.

He slowly realized a car was coming his way. It had a sleek sound to it, like a sports car. As the sound neared, Elgin smiled with recognition. He walked into the very middle of the road and, standing wide, he held his arms out and lifted his face. "Come on!" he screamed just as the sports car rounded the corner.

The driver of the car swerved at the sight of the man in the middle of the road and the car went careening over the side of the road. Down a steep but small embankment, it went rolling twice down into a field of parched grass. A fence was destroyed in the process, and one of the riders was thrown in the process.

Elgin dropped his hands as though exasperated. He turned his head to look back at the car, then began to stomp for it. “Was that really so hard?” Elgin yelled as he stepped off the highway and descended the embankment. “Was it really so hard for you jagoffs to do ONE damn thing right?” As he approached, the driver’s door was kicked open and it fell off its hinges. The driver fell out. “It’s bad enough you jackasses are what you are, but you can’t even be consistent about it!” He came over the driver and screamed “Why didn’t you kill me this time?!”

“Wh-what?” the driver stammered, his long hair stained with blood from the accident.

Elgin knelt down like a condescending father. “If I check the trunk, what am I going to find?” The driver’s eyes went wide with terror. “Did you finish burying him, or did you idiots half-ass that too?” He left the driver on the ground and went around to the smashed up trunk of the sports car and threw it open. Inside was a bloodied tarp that had been flattened out against the frame of the trunk. “Was he still screaming when you left?” Elgin yelled. He stormed back around, his steps turning into a skip where he kicked the driver in the stomach. “Was he still screaming?!” Elgin yelled so loud, his voice went hoarse.

“Hey!” yelled the passenger who had been thrown. Elgin turned to him and the big, fat guy in clothes too big even for him was aiming a gun at Elgin. “Back off, crackpot.”

“Back off?” Elgin asked like it was the most preposterous request ever. He began to approach the big man. “Back off? You bastards stroll into a diner, pick a fight with a bunch of lowlife punks from out of town? That’s fine.” He kept approaching as the big man backed away, the pistol shaking in his meaty hand. “But then you bastards HAD – you just HAD – to pick on that family. You just HAD to!” Elgin screamed, scaring the big man so much he dropped his gun. “You beat him up, you beat her up, and you took them from ME!” The big man fell over his own feet and began to crawl away from Elgin.

Elgin picked up the pistol and sneered at it. He looked at the big man. “How many times did I say ‘stop’?” he asked the big man, tears in his eyes. “How many times

did I say 'leave my daddy alone'? 'Leave my mommy alone'? And you want me to back off? You want ME to back OFF?!" Elgin unloaded the entire gun into the big man, scattering his body into the ground. When the gun clicked empty and the air was still after the echoes of the shots were gone, Elgin began to stamp on what remained of the body until he felt he'd driven it into the ground.

When Elgin turned slowly, his hateful gaze falling on the driver, the once-proud man got to his feet and backed up against the car. His fingers searched for a weapon but found nothing more substantial than the radio antennae. Still, he ripped it from the frame and held it ready.

Elgin began to very slowly walk back to the car crash, each step squelching with the remains of the big man under his heel. He adjusted his jacket, bloodstained and wet with murder. He rebuttoned it and brushed it down, then finally sighed and smiled professionally to the driver.

"Wh-who are you?" stammered the driver.

Elgin, still approaching in no hurry, said "I'm who I would have been if you'd done what you did, but left me alive. You would have made a monster, though. But the instant you buried me in the cardboard box in the dirt, the monster decided he wanted revenge." He reached the driver and the driver swung at him with the antennae. Elgin didn't even bother with the attack; he just punched the driver in the throat and let him fall back against the car gasping. "I'm Elgin Morris," he told the driver as he very paternally took the young man by the neck. He pressed both thumbs into his throat and the driver began to cough and choke. He fought but had no strength to do anything but die. And Elgin told him, "I'm who the boy you just murdered would have been."